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CHICAGOANS MAKE FOOD FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Broadcast by Joe Tonkin, Radio Chief, Food Distribution Administration, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Turrell, Chicago Victory Garden leaders, Avalon Park, Chicago in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, November 24, 1943, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

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KADDERLY: It is natural that at times we think of food as an exclusive product of the farm. It's true, of course, that the bulk of our daily diet originates in the fields and pastures of rural America. But especially since the war began - another type of food producer has made himself prominent in the national scene. I'm talking about the Victory Gardener and his place in the Food Fights for Freedom program.

Waiting in Chicago is Joe Tonkin, Radio chief, for the Food Distribution Administration in the Midwest. With him are two guests who have a lot of first hand information about this part of our war effort. Go ahead, Joe.

TONKIN: Thanks, Wallace - our guests are Mr. and Mrs. Harry Turrell, of Avalon Park, who have been chosen to tell us about some of their activities in this phase of the Food Fights for Freedom program.

Mr. Turrell, we know you manage a chain of theaters in your section of the city, but what is your official gardening title in Avalon Park?

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TURRELL: I'm Victory Garden Chairman, Joe.

TONKIN: And what about you, Mrs. Turrell, are you a titled gardener?

MRS. TURRELL: No, you can just say I'm Harry's partner.

TONKIN: Well, I know that both of you have done an outstanding job. The nation is going to need many more leaders in Victory Garden work this coming spring, and here's our chance to show them what can be accomplished. Mr. Turrell when did you start being a Victory Gardener?

TURRELL: When they were first suggested in the Spring of 1942. I kind of got my eye on a large tract of land at the corner of 83rd Street and Dorchester Avenue.

TONKIN: That's somewhat crowded in that section of the city - how come all this vacant land?

TURRELL: Well, you see, that used to be the city dump.

MRS. TURRELL: Garden experts said we just couldn't get anything to grow there. That's when we started to talk about it to our neighbors.

TONKIN: Did you get much help?

MRS. TURRELL: To tell the truth it was hard to get anyone interested - at first - They'd take one look at it and back away, but we just kept right on talking.

TONKIN: Then what happened?

TURRELL: We started to have meetings and by spring we had enough folks interested that we could map out a program.

MRS. TURRELL: That's when they made him chairman.

TONKIN: But wasn't it quite a job to turn the city dump into a garden, expecially when I hear that it has now won the admiration of the experts from the Department of Agriculture and the University of Illinois; and to top that was awarded the Grand Champion Ribbon for quality and the Blue Ribbon at the Victory Garden Festival held out at Soldier's Field.

TURRELL: Yes, we had everything from old bed springs to tin cans to clean out of there before we could begin to plant.

TONKIN: And what has been the result of all this work and interest? In other words, how many Victory Gardens did you have in Avalon Park this last season?

TURRELL: We had 530 gardens, or about one for every three families.

TONKIN: Maybe that would mean a little more if I told our audience that the community of Avalon Park is a little over one mile square. But what's this I hear about a Victory Garden library?

MRS. TURRELL: As we went along with the work, we discovered that a lot of people had questions to ask that most of us couldn't answer. You see, we live in golf-playing, card-playing section where the women had never canned anything. So we decided to start a Victory Garden library where everything from textbooks to seed catalogues would be available to the workers.

TONKIN: And where is this library, Mrs. Turrell?

MRS. TURRELL: We use the basement of our house as a neighborhood information center and place to discuss our gardening problems.

TONKIN: Well, now that the gardens were all started, what happened when the vegetables began to mature?

TURRELL: That's where my work stopped and Mrs. Turrell's began. In the spring she held meetings in the high school, so housewives could tell their gardener husbands to plant the right things.

TONKIN: And the canning could start without a hitch.

MRS. TURRELL: Yes, and we all had such good crops that we wanted to make sure that none of the food went to waste. So I started to look around for other ways to help our people conserve and preserve the surplus.

TONKIN: How did you do that?

MRS. TURRELL: By new recipes for canning and preserving food by brining. We had another meeting at our house and housewives who had canning recipes which had been tested, were asked to come and put that recipe in a big home-made book. That book is now in the library you mentioned.

TONKIN: A moment ago, you spoke of conservation. That practically takes the fruits of your labor right to the table, doesn't it?

MRS. TURRELL: Yes, and it is there that we find our next step in the Food Fights For Freedom program -- to stop food waste in the home. That's a matter that every housewife has to carry on for herself -- along with sharing and playing square.

TONKIN: Mr. Turrell, we've been talking a lot about what has been done in the past. Now, as a representative gardener, do you have any suggestions to pass on to your countrymen as you look to the coming year?

MR. TURRELL: All this month it has been impressed upon us that our national food supply is one of the ingredients of final victory and peace. When we contribute to this supply, we're doing a real war service. But to be practical, I'd say do your plowing, or spading right now, start a compost pile, then next spring make a planting schedule of vegetables suitable for canning and stick to it. It is our goal to have all our people double their gardening space this coming season. The prospects for gardeners are good. More insecticides...more and better fertilizer...plenty of seed, and most important of all, more good experience.

TONKIN: In other words, you regard your job as not only one of sharing, playing square and conservation but also one of production. There is just one more question I would like to ask in conclusion, Mr. Turrell, do many of your Victory Gardeners have sons in the armed services?

TURRELL: They do, Joe, I guess, in this respect, it's more than just the food we're gardening for -- it makes us feel a little better when we look at that honor roll of men from Avalon Park in uniform, especially one of our victory gardeners whose son is represented by a gold star.

TONKIN: That, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Turrell, speaks for the loyalty of Victory Gardeners everywhere. Our thanks to you both for being with us today.

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